

# The Clipper Visits A Historic House

By MYRNA WALSH

You'd drive by the high hedges on Standish St., never knowing that they obscured a lived-in museum. Its back turned to the busy street, the Sampson Winslow House is archeology without the dirt. Its history matches precisely that of Duxbury's.

The land was worked by the Indians and farmed by Captain Myles Standish and Francis Eaton when they moved from Plymouth. It is possibly the oldest continually worked farm in New England. The house and lands have remained in the Standish-Brewster lineage for generations, until now.

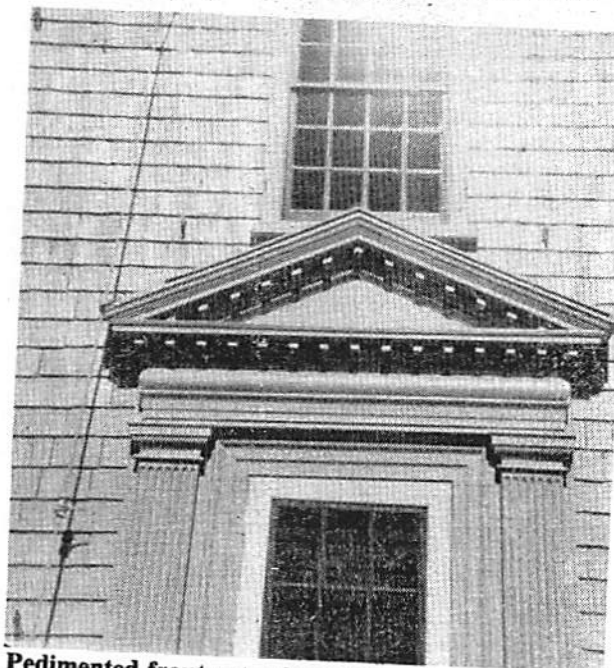
The house marks Duxbury's passage from a community bound to the sea to one of gentility and refinement.

In the 1780s, a great-grandson of Elder Brewster, John Sampson, bought 36 acres and later passed this land on to his son, Sylvanus. According to a history compiled by the present owner, Richard Winslow, Sylvanus served as a master on the great ships owned by Captain Ezra Weston, nicknamed King Caesar. Captain Sampson involved himself in several of Weston's businesses and later married the boss's daughter, Sylvia Church Weston. Together the newlyweds moved to The Nook in 1787.

The Winslow family thinks the main part of the house was built in 1792. Their information, like so much of history, is based on the ledgers and scraps of paper packratted by Sampson. Apparently he kept trunkfuls of notes and ledgers and these indicate an addition to the house in 1806, but no mention is made of construction costs before then. It would have been uncharacteristic of him to discard any information about the construction of his new home and therefore it is possible that the young couple moved into an existing home. Thus, the Winslows speculate, the house might be older than the 1792 date indicates.

At the bottom of a sweeping lawn stands a small weathered boathouse, stone work and pilings, the remains of a once-thriving shipping business -- one that brought exotic cargo to the shops of Duxbury. Sloops and schooners, later to be joined by brigs, visited the West Indies, Portugal, France, Egypt, Turkey, Germany and Russia.

In an unusual business arrangement, called vertical combination, the ship's captain sold his cargo directly to the public, instead of distributing the goods to wholesalers and retailers.



**Pedimented front entry framed by pilastered columns.**

From Captain Sampson to the present owner is a short 6 generations. Now the line is about to be broken. The property is for sale.

Passing out of the Sampson line are the perfectly preserved ship store, the continuously farmed land and a house filled with enough architectural details to please a purist.

Sitting on 7 acres, watching for the old wooden ships, the house's 12 rooms are rich with Georgian and Federalist details.

John Cole, a broker who specializes in "Great Houses," said the main house is Georgian. (The "L" is Federal.) He pointed out the sharply pitched roof, balanced window spacing and the pedimented doorway encased in fluted pilastered columns. Inside, authentic Georgian features include paneled walls, wide board floors, fireplaces lacking mantels, early glass and decorated tiles.

Cole said, "The house is almost wholly original" as he pointed to the raised field paneling (also called raised block paneling), to the wainscoting and moulded chair rails. Walking through the house with Cole is like taking a cram course in woodwork and hardware. And what was previously a keeping room or best chamber becomes an intricately constructed example of what the gentry prized. The turnings, the mouldings and hardware reveal their tastes and style as surely as do the ledgers in the store.

In one of the bedrooms, antique tiles bearing annotated scenes from the Bible encircle the fireplace. The hardware in the

*Sampson*  
HISTORICAL HOUSES - NAMED, A-Z

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sonalities of our Founding Fathers by looking at the rooms they lived in. He said, "They were environmentally conscious in their choice of sites. There is seldom water in the cellar of these older homes. They were very obviously up against the elements and even so they paid attention to decor and detail and balance. The 'L's' were added with a sense of taste and proportion. Many of the homes are over-engineered - the timber framing was so sturdy that the buildings lasted. And the people were resourceful. And religious. But also very isolated -- we almost have no concept of how long it took to get from one place to another." He suggested that families stayed together, with the father selling off nearby lots to his sons.

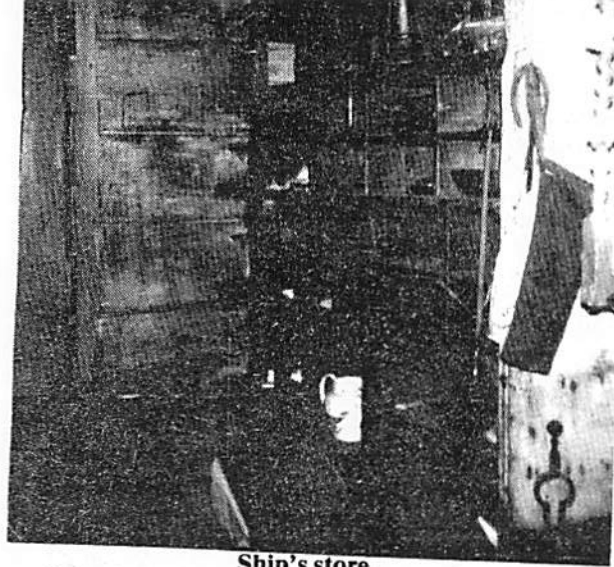
Cole emphasized that the people were used to hard work and wore heavy clothing in winter. The Winslow house shows a family moving into an age of gentility as shown by the dining room. Previously the family had all eaten at the kitchen table. And the Winslows almost certainly had indentured servants who probably lived in the small bedroom next to the back stairs which lead to the kitchen.

Who would want to buy this type of home, complete with the responsibility of preserving it? Cole said, "It would appeal to people interested in history, in the people who lived here. This house has a gracious quality, a quiet elegance. You couldn't afford to have it reproduced. The new owners should be interested in restoration and preservation and willing to learn about the original colors and details. They would need a mixture of patience and care. And have a sense of architecture. They can't just come in and blow in a kitchen."

Cole, who has been a consultant to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, recently directed a project on preservation covenants in Ipswich. In an effort to preserve the interior, as well as exterior of their homes in the future, the owners of 20 appraised and selected buildings signed an agreement or covenant, promising to preserve the special features that make their homes so unique.

He explained, "The covenants are designed to balance the comfort of dailing living with the preservation of the rare features of the homes. I went through 125 historical houses making architectural evaluations and recommended the 20 or so that we wanted to include in the covenant."

The appraisals, funded through the local historical commission and HUD, gave the



**Ship's store.**

Remaining virtually intact, the ship's store is a treasure. Rich with the ripe smell of wood aging naturally to a tobacco brown, and textured with the wear of thousands of transactions, the store is a repository for a time traveler. It is easy to imagine young Duxbury matrons shopping for cloth or tea and the prosperous men of the day getting news of foreign lands while purchasing tobacco. The low, L-shaped counters have been gently carved with the comings and goings, the leaning forward for a bit of gossip, the sliding of goods back and forth. Behind the counters, shelves reach to the ceiling, holding trinkets and ledgers from other countries. A harpoon hangs from the ceiling. The door, for walk-in business, flanked by huge slabs of wood, ready to be thrown shut when the storms roll across the sea.

Winslow's description claims that some 8,000 pieces of paper, documents and account books were stored in the shop's flour bin, trunks and stagecoach boxes.

Although most of the entries record business transactions, they help sketch the life of Duxburyites at that time. "They wore morocco shoes and spring'd muslins, bombazet, everlastings and amens. They took snuff and smoked 'segars.' Windsor soap was available," the record continues, "but it crossed the shop's counter in very small proportion to the amount of rum, molasses, corn and Malaga wine sold. They poured Behea, Hyson and Gunpowder tea from black teapots and treated themselves with turkey rhubarb, chamomile flowers and, (my goodness) gum opium." The shop was a general store and later expanded to a bank and post office.

Great H or HL-shaped hinges. And these are painted to match the wall or door to which they are attached. So one part might be brown, the other white. The people were practical, sturdy and religious. They didn't waste space on sweeping staircases -- none of the swoosh and rustle of the style that Scarlett O'Hara made famous.

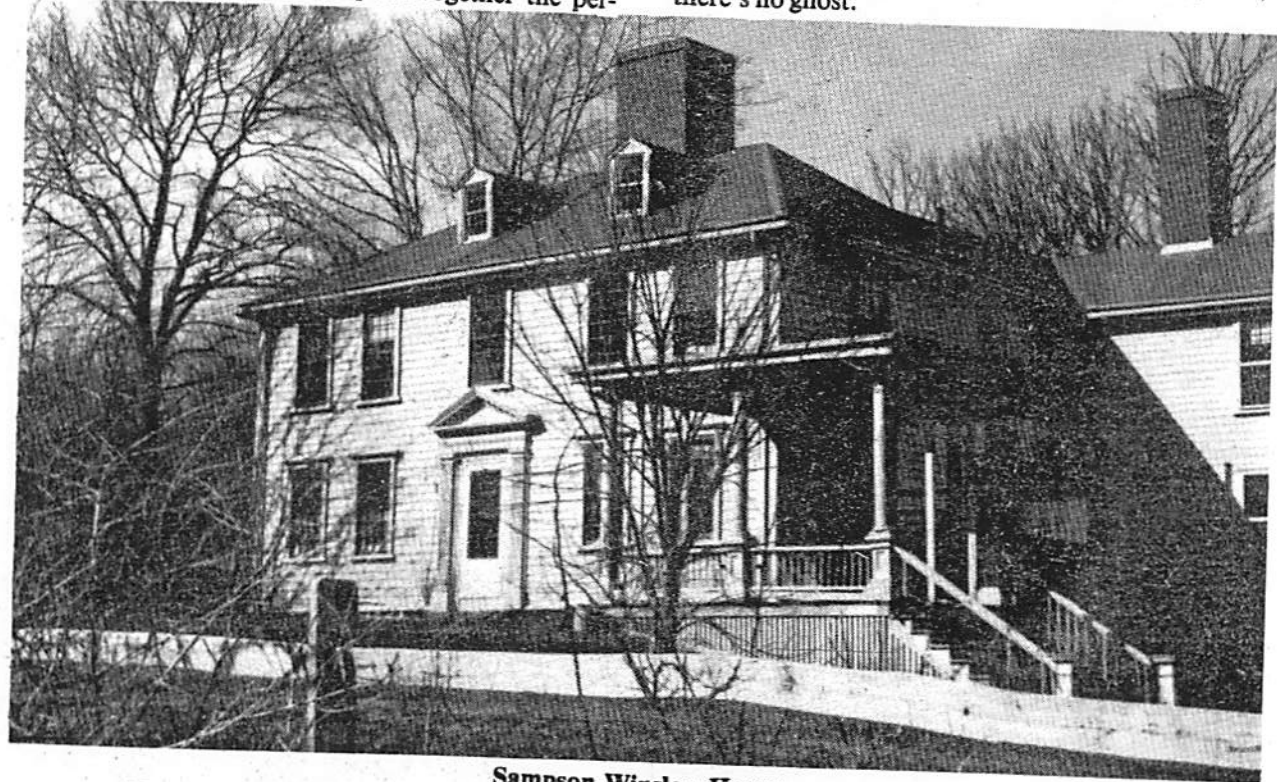
A fireplace in the cellar is brick and was probably used for household industrial boilings -- lye and soap. But it also includes a bake oven and it is likely that the residents cooked in it during the hot summer months.

Cole, who sells only early houses and has come to be a recognized expert, can piece together the per-

fect of the unique features of their homes. If such a project were started in Duxbury, surely the Sampson-Winslow House would be included. From the queen's post framing in the attic, to the ceiling-high knobs for hanging pictures, down through the ship's store to the arched fireplace in the basement, this home is as much a part of the town's history as the books in the Duxbury Room at the library or the old family names.

Cole said, "I have a strong sense that this is a house that people have been happy in. There is a lot of light and it's near the sea. There's a calm quality about the house."

It would, it seems, have everything. But, alas, there's no ghost.



**Sampson-Winslow House.**

## July 4th Program

July 3, 6:30-8:30 pm, Free open air concert by DHS Jazz Band, flag pole area of DIS.

July 4, 10 am-12, Free children's program, ages thru 12 yrs., clowns, games, races, ice cream, sponsored by July 4th committee and conducted by the Rec Dept. For information call Frank LeSeuer (585-6586); held between library and pool.

July 4, 10:30 am, Road race for Duxbury residents and houseguests. Begin at Miramar, end at DIS.

For registration and information call John Walkey (934-5588) or Bob Lyons (834-7686).

July 4 at 2: Parade starts at Hall's Corner to flag pole, St. George St., Alden St., ending at Train Field.

June 20 is the registration deadline for floats. For information call Claire Peterson (585-9280) or Ellen Laramie (837-3502). To register horses, call Kathleen Redler (834-6805). For bicycle registration and publicity, call Claire Peterson (585-9280), Ellen Laramie (837-3502) or Judy Prescott (934-6312).